

Louisville, KY — Today, Congressman Walz gave a keynote address at the American Legion National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. He thanked the Legion for their tireless efforts to both honor veterans and to guarantee they receive the benefits they have earned.

Congressman Walz spoke about the need for the VA and DOD to work together to ensure that returning servicemen and women do not fall through the cracks when they transition to civilian life and asked the Legion for their leadership and expertise to help make this goal a reality.

He also highlighted the work the 110th Congress had done and that the 111th Congress and the Obama Administration is doing now to ensure that we fulfill the moral obligation we owe to our veterans, like increasing funding to the VA and writing a new GI bill that will give a new generation of American soldiers the kind of opportunities this nation gave their grandparents during World War II.

Excerpts from Congressman Walz's Speech, as prepared for delivery:

"I know that when we work together, as we should, in a way that transcends politics, then I know that we can do right by our veterans, and in doing that, we can come together as a nation... We can debate things, and we can have differences, but we can also work them out, and figure out how to get to our common goal. And it is your leadership and your voice that serve as a guidepost for us to work from and to try to get where we need to go."

"We have been talking about seamless transition for at least a generation. But I will tell you why I am optimistic about this now. I am optimistic because we've got Congress on board, we've got the administration on board, and we've got two Secretaries, Secretary Gates and Secretary Shinseki, on board and who seem committed to working together in an unprecedented way."

"In all of this, you lead the way. And on seamless transition, we need your help – to tell us what our newest veterans need, and to tell us how to do it right. The Legion speaks with the voice of experience and has the vision to propel this to initiative to completion in the very near future."

Congressman Walz serves as a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. He spent 24 years in the National Guard and is the highest ranking enlisted soldier to serve in Congress.